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ABSTRACT

In light of on-going strife in the Middle East, particularly in Palestinian-Israeli relations, it is intriguing to note how relatively unaware many Americans are of the historical and religious framework from which much of the conflict derives. In addition, the perception of many Americans of current Palestinian-Israeli relations has been tainted by media portrayals and cultural misunderstandings of Middle Eastern culture, perhaps due to the lack of in-depth study. This curriculum unit examines 20th century Palestinian-Israeli issues from a wider historical and religious perspective so as to foster a greater understanding and appreciation for the conflict and culture beyond news flashes and stereotypes. The unit contains a series of six lessons, designed for secondary education classes, that introduce the main topics and factors that have contributed to the current situation. Objectives, a brief background, and suggested strategies are offered for each lesson. A glossary of useful terms and a 29-item list of suggested sources are also included. The six lessons include: (1) "Introduction to Palestinian-Israeli Relations"; (2) "Islam: Origins, Beliefs, and Practices"; (3) "Spread of the Islamic Empire"; (4) "Judaism: Origins and Early History"; (5) "Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Creation of Israel"; and (6) "The Day After and a Half-Century of Conflict." (BT)

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UNDERSTANDING THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT:
A Historical and Religious Perspective

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A Historical and Religious Perspective

Introduction:

In light of on-going strife in the Middle East, particularly Palestinian-Israeli relations, it is intriguing to note how relatively unaware many Americans are of the historical and religious framework from which much of the conflict derives. In many world culture or global studies courses, aspects of the religious beliefs and practices, historical events, and recent situations of the region are often studied. Unfortunately, the scope and sequence of any such series of lessons is usually limited at best. In addition, the perception of many Americans of current Palestinian-Israeli relations has been tainted by media portrayals and cultural misunderstandings of Middle Eastern culture, perhaps due to the lack of in-depth study. It is therefore necessary to create a unit that examines 20th century Palestinian-Israeli issues from a wider historical and religious perspective so as to foster a greater understanding and appreciation for the conflict and culture beyond mere news flashes and misguided stereotypes.

The following is a series of six lessons that attempts to introduce the main topics and factors that have contributed to the current situation. While much material is provided here, and it is rather broad, lesson topics have been chosen so as to emphasis the major contributing forces. In this sense, a more in-depth analyze can occur. It is designed for secondary education classes. Objectives, a brief background, and suggested strategies are offered for each suggested lesson. A glossary of useful terms and a list of suggested sources are also included.

If there are any questions, comments, or a need for additional information, please write:

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Unit Objectives:

I. Discuss the historical and religious significance of Palestine to the three main religious groups of the region.

II. Identify general facts about Islam, its worldwide influence and growth, as well as common perceptions and misconceptions about the religion and lifestyle.

III. Identify the Five Pillars of Islam and explain their significance to religious law and Islamic life.

IV. Discuss the founding of Islam and the significance of Muhammad to the religion.

V. Identify key elements of the Koran and other sacred Islamic texts, and discuss the importance of the writings to the Islamic religious and political community.

VI. Discuss the characteristics and achievements of the Islamic empire, as well as the causes and effects of its expansion and eventual decline.

VII. Describe the core beliefs and practices of Judaism, provide a brief historical explanation for its growth in the Middle East, and discuss its ensuing worldwide impact.

VIII. Discuss the causes and effects of the rise of Zionism and anti-Semitism in Europe and Middle East in the late 1800s, as well as the significance of the major events that led up to the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine.

IX. Discuss the causes and effects of the creation of Israel, as well as ensuing events in the following years, specifically regarding the relationship between Israel and Arab countries in the region.

X. Describe major conflicts in the Middle East region with particular attention to local and international causes and effects.

XI. Discuss current political situations in the Middle East region, potential conflicts, and possible future solutions.

XII. Identify key terms, figures, ideas, places, and events associated with Islam, Judaism, and the 20th century Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Lesson #1 ***Introduction to Palestinian-Israeli Relations***

Objectives: I, XI, XII

Teacher Background:

In order to begin to understand the deeply rooted sentiments that can be found in the Middle East, particularly Palestinian-Israeli relations, it is first necessary to give students a general idea of the religious and historical significance of the region. To Jews, Israel is the Promised Land, the place where Abraham made the covenant with God, and the scene of numerous struggles to maintain possession of the land. Atop the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (derived from the Arabic and Hebrew word for "peace") was the site of the now destroyed First and Second Temples. All that remains is the Western Wall, the spiritual focal point of Judaism. Since 1948, Israel has represented the return of the Jews to Zion after thousands of years of exile.

For Muslims the land is held sacred as well. Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam (Mecca and Medina are first and second respectively), is the site of Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which houses the area from which Mohammed made his ascension into heaven. In addition, nearly a million Palestinians have made their homes in the nation, primarily in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Over a million more are refugees in surrounding Arab nations.

Christianity also considers Israel hallowed as well. In addition to being the scene of the stories of the Old Testament, it is the land upon which Jesus and his disciples lived and died. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem commemorates the place where Jesus was crucified, taken from the cross, and buried. Christian pilgrims, once barred from entering the city, flock to visit the holy sites of early Christianity.

It is critical that the teacher explains the extreme significance of the land to the three different monotheistic groups from a general standpoint. From this basic foundation, the thousands of years of history, as well as present-day situations will begin to be comprehended.

Suggested Strategies:

A. *General Introduction*

As an initial exercise, ask students to interpret and respond to the saying, "Israel is 'too long on history; too short on geography.'" Showing a student a map of the Old City of Jerusalem is useful for demonstrating the importance of the land to the three different religious groups. It is also helpful to provide students with a blank outline map of Israel (which also includes the surrounding countries) and have them fill in major place names and bodies of water. In addition to allowing the students to begin to get an understanding of the geography of the region, the maps can be used throughout the unit as a reference point. Major places of interest should include, but are not limited to: Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, Jordan River, Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea, Gulf of Aqaba, Mediterranean Sea.

B. *Map and Facts*

Using the map, the teacher should briefly discuss the topographical features of the region as well as socioeconomic and demographic conditions. Consider these points:

Geography, Climate, and Resources:

- Israel is about the size of New Jersey
- Israel is mostly desert in a predominantly arid region
- southern Israel, the Negev, is barren (but has many kibbutzim)
- the only real natural resource is the Dead Sea
- Israel has minor oil reserves in a region where oil is the dominant economic factor
- natural gas had been discovered in the Mediterranean Sea, but it is estimated that it is only about a twenty-five year supply
- water supply is a major issue; almost 30% of Israel's fresh water comes from the Sea of Galilee

Demographics, etc.:

- Israel's population is about six million
- about 82% of the population are Jews
- one out of every six is an Arab
- there are about 720 people per square mile
- 91% of the population is urban
- over half of the Jewish population was born outside of Israel
- the worldwide Jewish population is about 13 million
- there are Jews from 120 countries who speak about 80 different languages
- Jerusalem has a population of over 600,000

C. *Development of Inquiry*

Since the students have been exposed to a basic historical and religious overview of the significance of the region, as well as several critical current facts, they can now begin to develop questions that will be answered by the conclusion of the unit. While it is necessary to have certain questions in place, the teacher must let the students create their own questions with minimal prompts. This allows greater ownership and interest for the material. In essence, the students will use limited information to begin to construct questions in a fashion similar to building a series of hypotheses. Perhaps the best way to do this is to break up the students into two smaller groups. One group will begin to develop questions from an Palestinian point of view, while the other group will create questions from a Jewish standpoint. The questions should be shared in a larger class format, and perhaps be kept in an easily noticeable place throughout the duration of the unit. Questions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Can a distinction be made between tension derived from religious differences and conflict due to socioeconomic factors?
- Do socioeconomic and ethnic problems exist amongst the different groups, and it so, what role do they play??
- What role do cultural forces play in the propagation of the problem?
- What measures have been taken to solve the problem, and are there any possible solutions?

Lesson #2 ***Islam: Origins, Beliefs, and Practices***

Objectives: II, III, IV, V, XII

Teacher Background:

Islam (derived from the Arabic word *salaam*, meaning "peace"), translates literally as "service or submission to the will of God," arose on the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century CE. Muhammad, considered the ultimate prophet in a long line of prophets descending back to Abraham, began to receive revelations from Allah through the angel Gabriel. The revelations were collected in the Koran (Qur'an), the holy book of Islam. Interpretations (*Hadith* and *Sunna*) of the revelations and of Muhammad's life have formed the basis of Islamic law, which significantly influence Middle Eastern society at all levels.

While in Mecca, Muhammad began preaching Allah's messages. Such activity gradually angered the political and religious leaders of the city, and Muhammad was eventually considered a threat. Under pressure, Muhammad was forced to flee Mecca, and journeyed to the city of Medina (this flight from Mecca is known as the *hijra*). In Medina, Muhammad gained a group of spiritual followers, building up his military strength as well. Muhammad and his followers initially began to disrupt the trade routes of Mecca, which at the time was a major economic and cultural hub. Eventually, in 630 CE, Muhammad and his followers conquered Mecca, and (considering the city's position as a commerce center) established it as the core of the new religion from which it would continue to grow.

Worldwide, there are approximately one billion Muslims (a Muslim literally translates as "one who submits"), many of whom (despite commonly held belief) do not reside in the Middle East. All Muslims embrace the Five Pillars, the five major duties that must be performed. They are *shahada* (a statement of faith: "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet"), *salat* (prayer which occurs five times daily in the direction of Mecca), *sawm* (fasting during the month of Ramadan), *zakat* (almsgiving), and *hajj*, (a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in every Muslim's life if physically and financially capable).

Suggested Strategies:

A. *Image Response*

In an attempt to get students thinking about the different aspects of what is often considered a very foreign lifestyle, images can be shown which display various characteristics of Islam. Images of a mosque, pilgrims encircling the kaaba, the Koran, Arabic script, a veiled woman, and Muslims at prayer may elicit the most curious responses. Students should be shown such images and asked to write words or phrases that come to mind. After the pictures have been presented to the students, the teacher should ask the students to share their responses. (During this time, students will probably have written down stereotypes associated with Muslims. This can be considered an opportune forum to discuss such issues and from where they derive). The teacher can then use the student replies to begin to explain some of the beliefs and practices of the religion.

B. *Verses from the Koran*

To begin to get an understanding of the Islamic frame of reference, it is necessary to examine several *suras* (chapters) of the Koran. While many suras are worth analysis, the two that have perhaps the most meaning to this unit are *al-Fatiha* ("the Opening") and *Jihad* ("Struggle"). The teacher should review both of these *suras* with the students in order to extrapolate connective meaning to the broader unit goals. Of particular importance are the idea presented in the *suras* of believers and non-believers, the "right path," and taking up arms. By presenting these two *suras*, of course, the teacher runs the risk of creating or compounding misconceptions. In order to avoid misrepresentation, it should be noted and explained to the students that Islam in general is a tolerant religion, and the concept of *jihad* is essentially a figurative one. Despite the belief that Allah will not forgive those whom do not believe, a general hostile view of non-Muslims is not inherent of Islam. Students should know the purpose of using these particular suras, and be given the opportunity to examine others.

Lesson #3 ***Spread of the Islamic Empire***

Objectives: I, IV, VI, X, XII

Teacher Background:

Following the death of Muhammad, a crisis arose concerning who should be his spiritual successor. Essentially, the dilemma created the foundation for the development of the Shiite and Sunnite division within Islam. Nevertheless, under the Umayyad dynasty, founded by Mu'awiyah in the seventh century, the Islamic empire began to expand, shifting its capital to Damascus. After almost a century had passed, the Abbassids, centered in eastern Iran, defeated the Umayyads in 750. The focus of Islamic power was relocated to Baghdad. From this center, Islamic culture flourished and expanded.

What concerns the teacher and students during this particular lesson, however, is the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, in centuries prior to Islamic rule, became increasingly Christian (for example, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built in the fourth century). Muhammad had originally designated Jerusalem as the city to which Muslims should pray prior to its replacement by Mecca as the spiritual focal point. In the seventh century the caliph Umar conquered the city. Consequently, the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque were built on Al-Haram ash-Sharif, (the Temple Mount), the site of the First and Second Temples which had been previously destroyed. ***Herein lies the central conflict***.

By the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks invaded and conquered the city, disallowing Christian pilgrims. This acted as a catalyst for the Crusades, during which Jerusalem exchanged hands between the Muslims and Christians. Saladin eventually recaptured the city in the twelfth century and the Ottoman Turks seized it in the early 1500s. Jerusalem was under Ottoman rule until the collapse of the empire in 1917, setting the state for the ongoing twentieth century conflict.

Suggested Strategies: *Timeline Construction*

Using various sources, students should begin to collect information regarding the major events of the Islamic Empire following the death of Muhammad. It is not necessary to focus on the achievements of the Abbassid dynasty, however, such accomplishments should be noted. For the purposes of this unit, it is more critical to have students understand the increasing Muslim nature of the region as a result of conquest and conversion. To achieve this goal, the teacher should direct students to find the cause and effect relationship of the various milestones along the timeline, culminating in the fall of the Ottoman Empire. To make such an activity more extensive, major figures (i.e. Muhammad, Saladin, etc.) can be have a place on the timeline as well, with sections reserved for important facts regarding their roles. This would have the effect of highlighting not just the series of connecting events, but also introducing the variable of various key players as integral to shaping history and subsequent tensions in the region. It can also serve as the basis of a discussion that focuses on the degree to which historical circumstance allowed certain individuals notoriety versus the impact of individual decisions on the forces of history.

Lesson #4 ***Judaism: Origins and Early History***

Objectives: I, VII, X, XII

Teacher Background:

Jews generally regard their shared history (so much of which has formed current beliefs, practices, and perceptions) as central to the common view of Judaism as not just a religion, but as a people as well. There remains a deep connection between the ancient and the modern, a bond that has fostered Jewish continuity (i.e. language, land, names, customs, etc.). The influence of the past, however, has potential dangers, many of which manifested themselves throughout the centuries, and in particular during the twentieth century and presently. Jewish history is generally marked by a recurring trend, that of dispersal, integration, and again, expulsion. Such a pattern has profoundly affected the Jewish ethos, and has played a vital role in both the perception that Jews and Israelis have of themselves and the outside world, as well as external attitudes concerning Jews and Israel.

The earliest known inhabitants of Palestine, the Canaanites, were conquered in the fourteenth century BCE by the Hebrews (a group of Semitic tribes from Mesopotamia). Perhaps the greatest legacy left by the Hebrews was the concept of ethical monotheism, a belief that, among other similarities, formed the basis of both Christianity and Islam. Of all the events in the long history of the Jews, perhaps none is as integral as that of Abraham making the covenant with God. The near sacrifice of Isaac as a testament of Abraham's faith is the earliest covenant of the Old Testament (Genesis 15: 12-21). As a result of the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham, the land of Palestine was bequeathed to the descendants of Abraham (an interesting note here is that Muslims regard themselves as descendants of Ishmael, considered Abraham's favored son and thus the one offered for sacrifice). Other Pentateuch stories of additional covenants between Yahweh and the Israelites are further proof for the Jews of the claim of Palestine as their own. In light of expulsions from other lands, the multiple covenants have also formed the basis of the idea of returning to the land of Palestine.

After migrating to Egypt as a result of famine, the Israelites were enslaved. As told in the biblical story known as Exodus, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. During the forty years of wandering throughout the Sinai Desert, God presented the Ten Commandments, the basis of Christian and Jewish law. Upon returning to the land of Palestine, the Israelites established a kingdom under Saul, and expanded their power in the region under King David (of *David and Goliath* fame). Under the leadership of King David, Jerusalem was built in the Judean hills. David's son, Solomon erected the First Temple, which later was destroyed by the Babylonians. As a result of the destruction of the First Temple and the city of Jerusalem, the Jews were sent into exile until Cyrus the Great of Persia permitted their return.

Returning to Palestine, the Jews rebuilt Jerusalem and constructed the Second Temple. By the first century BCE, however, the Roman Empire had expanded to the region, and in subsequent years, much of the early New Testament events transpired. In 70 CE, four years after the beginning of a Jewish revolt against Roman rule, Jerusalem and the Second Temple were destroyed, commencing an era of nearly two thousand years of exile.

Suggested Strategies: *Bible Readings and Timeline Construction*

Certainly, much of the information given in the Teacher Background section of this lesson will have to be given to students prior to starting this activity. These stories, however, reiterate key points. The purpose of examining several biblical passages is similar to the reasons behind analyzing verses from the Koran. An effort needs to be made to understand the formation of the Jewish frame of reference from a historical perspective. Of noteworthy importance are selections from the Pentateuch for reviewing the stories of the covenant. Critical facts, events, and personalities should be examined and recorded for the purpose of constructing a timeline in a fashion similar to Lesson #3. Additional sources regarding the Roman occupation may be used, such as the contemporary writings by the Jewish historian Josephus. Also, the story of the fall of Masada at the hands of the Roman legions further encapsulates the Jewish mentality concerning patterns of Jewish history. As a discussion point, ask to students to interpret and respond to the Israeli saying, "Masada shall not fall again" and the figurative connection of this idea with modern attempts to destroy the nation of Israel.

Lesson #5 ***Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Creation of Israel***

Objectives: I, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII

Teacher Background:

Throughout the Middle Ages and leading into the nineteenth century, discrimination and violence aimed at Jews continued. Anti-Semitism markedly increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century, correlating with a general rise in nationalism based on Social Darwinism. With the advent of nation-states, the concept of racial purification provided the theoretical justification for the removal of Jews, especially in Eastern Europe. Corresponding to greater anti-Semitic sentiment, Zionism began to gain support, particularly with the publication of The Jewish State by Theodor Herzl.

In the years following the turn of the century, *diaspora* nationalism seemed more realistic than *Promised Land* nationalism, since many Jews had been integrated successfully into a multitude of societies worldwide. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, however, the Balfour Declaration effectively advocated the concept of a national Jewish homeland in Palestine. In the ensuing years, Arab and Jewish opinion regarding the land began to differ at an alarming rate, resulting in increased tension and violence. The British, wary of conflicts of interest, became skeptical of the maintaining the mandate. The 1920s witnessed rising Zionist visions that encouraged immigration to the region. Anti-Semitism, particularly in Eastern Europe, rose sharply in this period as well. Increasingly, Jewish nationalism regarded territorial independence as a basis for the preservation of ethnic identity.

Of utmost significance, of course, is the aggrandizement of the Nazi Party in Germany during the 1930s. It should be noted here that Adolf Hitler did not come to power on the platform of anti-Semitism, but rather due to his economic and political promises made to a desperate and depressed post-war German citizenry. Coupled with financial hardships, the accumulated negative image of the Jew led to the acquiescence of the majority of German society to the Nazi regime. The loss of six million Jews to the Holocaust (1.5 million of which were children) added another painful chapter to the tragic history of the Jews. From a logistical standpoint, however, Jewish migration to Palestine increased the Jewish population in the area, but also caused greater tension with the Palestinians. It was during these years that Jerusalem and the Promised Land became a metaphorical paradise for the Jews.

In 1947, concerned about ongoing conflict, the British turned over control of the Palestine issue to the United Nations, which developed a plan to partition Palestine and make Jerusalem an international zone. The Palestinians rejected the offer, and renewed violence ensued. In 1948, Israel was proclaimed a nation, initiating a series of conflicts that marked Arab-Israeli relations during the second half of the twentieth century.

Suggested Strategies:

A. *Excerpts from Mein Kampf*

As evidence of the augmentation of anti-Semitism, the teacher should select passages from Mein Kampf for the class to examine. This could provide the groundwork for discussion concerning not only the mentality behind anti-Semitic views, but also the eventual unfortunate acceptance of such ways of thought.

B. *Holocaust Statistics and Readings*

Several primary source readings about the Holocaust, combined with the sobering statistics of death rates are useful for examining the effects of the event on the Jewish frame of reference. Certainly, numerous discussion points can originate from the readings. In addition, journal writings in the vein of Holocaust readings allow the student to analyze more carefully the internal human conflict questioning the presence of god and the goodness and evilness of humans.

C. *Dawn by Elie Wiesel*

This short book by the Nobel Prize winner is an excellent example of not only the resistance movement against British occupation, but also the representative dilemma of an Israeli, Zionist identity versus a Jewish, religious identity. Considering the evils of the Holocaust as perhaps the culminating act of hatred towards the Jews over the centuries, the tensions presented within this book provide many opportunities for discussion and reiteration of the main ideas of the unit.

Lesson #6 ***The Day After and a Half-Century of Conflict***

Objectives: I, X, XI, XII

Teacher Background:

The day following the establishment of Israel, the surrounding Arab nations of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Iraq declared war against the infant state. An Israeli victory meant the acquisition of additional territory, but also the displacement of nearly 700,000 Palestinians. Jerusalem was a divided city, as East Jerusalem was under the control of Transjordan. Israel's population continued to rise with the Law of Return, which granted immediate citizenship to any Jew. Most of the immigrants were Holocaust survivors.

Tensions continued throughout the 1950s, particularly over access to the waters of the Jordan River and the Suez Canal. In 1956, Israel invaded and acquired the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Increasing tensions during the 1960s consummated in the Six-Day War of 1967, initiated by Israel in response to pressure from its neighbors. The war resulted in Israel gaining the territories of the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank from Jordan, and most significantly, East Jerusalem.

The decade of the 1970s witnessed the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 (called the Yom Kippur War by Israelis and the Ramadan War by the Arabs), and increased terrorist activity aimed at the obliteration of Israel. An eventual peace agreement with Egypt resulted in the concession of the Sinai back to Egypt in 1979. The 1980s were marked by a series of conflicts, perhaps most notably the intifada movement, essentially a grass-roots Palestinian uprising targeting Israeli domination. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the larger Arab-Israeli conflict was no longer influenced by the superpowers, but rather became a regionl issue. Nevertheless, the United States continues to play a large role in the region, instigating the resentment of the Palestinians and the Arab community as a whole. In 1993, the Oslo accords resulted in a tentative peace agreement, which suffered a disastrous blow with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by an Israeli extremist.

Several significant issues are critical to understanding current Palestinian-Israeli relations. Presently, there are over 3.5 million Palestinian refugees who face poor living conditions, poor educational and employment opportunities, and discrimination. Arab citizens in Israel are exempt from military service, for example, but are limited in job prospects and social status as a result.

The concept of an independent Palestinian state faces several obstacles. The areas with the heaviest concentration of Palestinians are the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Geographically speaking, a divided nation is impractical. If a Palestinian nation is created, demographic problems are certain to develop with the return of Palestinian refugees. Concern remains over the establishment of new Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A Palestinian nation would need to economically rely on Israel and the outside world, a rather daunting prospect. Conversely, from an international diplomacy and domestic policy standpoint, the acceptance of a Palestinian state may be Israel's greatest asset.

Jerusalem remains the major issue. Yasir Arafat, like most Palestinians (as well as many Jews) expects nothing less than full sovereignty over the city. Increasing

violence in 2000 has led to Arafat claiming that he cannot control the situation. Based on the historical and religious significance of the region, it is likely that both Palestinians and Jews will make few compromises, if any. Yet, considering the Palestinian mindset, acceptance of Israel from an intellectual standpoint is, in essence, admitting Arab failure. Conversely, from the Jewish perspective, conceding certain territory believed to be granted from God is to risk losing land regained after thousands of years of struggle.

Suggested Strategies: *Newspaper Activity*

The different wars fought in the region following the establishment of Israel elicited different responses in Israel, amongst the Palestinians, and in surrounding Arab nations. An examination of the causes and effects *per country* can set the framework for this activity. Students can be broken up into groups of four or five. Each member of the group will be responsible for collecting and reporting on information regarding the various wars of the region. The students can choose from any of the different conflicts, but the group must decide on only one. After students have collected information, they will write a short newspaper article *from the perspective of his or her specific nation.* The goal here is to have students understand the larger Arab-Israeli conflict and the various perspectives regarding the same events. Students can peer edit the writings and create the front page of a newspaper (poster board works well).

Unit Evaluation: *Essential Questions*

As the conclusive exercise of the unit, students, who have been given substantial information regarding the significance of the region, the history of the Jews, the history of Islam, and Palestinian-Israel relations should be able to come up with a set of essential questions regarding the topic. Since the larger issue remains unresolved, such questions will be designed in a way so as to foster the development of possible solutions to the on-going crisis. If possible, the questions should be formulated as a yes-no type. These essential questions can serve as the basis of a more intensive research paper, a debate, or possibly even a mock summit. Sample questions include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

- Is Israel recognition of an independent Palestinian state in its best interests or is it considered a weakness?
- Will the Israeli or Palestinian leadership be more concerned about far right sentiment than as moderate stance?
- Will the larger Arab world place pressure on Palestinian leadership to not give in to Israeli peace demands, and vice versa?
- Is the United States' role in the region dictated by economics or altruism?
- Does the United States exercise too much authority in a region and culture it may not understand very well, or is the United States' position necessary?
- Can the Jerusalem issue be resolved by making the city an international zone?

Glossary of Terms:

covenant:
an agreement or promise

Temple Mount:
(or Al-Haram ash-Sharif) found in the Old City of Jerusalem, it is the site of the now destroyed First and Second Temples, as well as the location of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque

Zion:
Israel

mosque:
Islamic house of worship

kibbutz(im):
a unique, collective Israeli community

Allah:
God

Koran:
the Islamic sacred text; a collection of the revelations given to Muhammad by Allah through the angel Gabriel

Hadith and Sunna:
Islamic law commentaries that serve as moral and legal guides to Islamic life

Five Pillars:
a series of duties that Muslims must perform

Ramadan:
the holiest month of the Islamic lunar calendar, during which Muhammad received the revelations from Allah

sura:
chapter of the Koran

Shia:
branch of Islam; recognizes Ali and the Imams as the rightful successors to Muhammad

Sunni:
branch of Islam; recognizes the first four caliphs as the rightful successors to Muhammad

caliph:
a religious and civil head of Islam; considered a successor of Muhammad

Semitic:
referring to the culture of several early tribes of Mesopotamia (from which both Arabic and Hebrew derived)

monotheism:
belief in one god

Yahweh:
God

Pentateuch:
the first five books of the Old Testament

anti-Semitism:
discrimination against Jews

Social Darwinism:
Charles Darwin's concept of survival of the fittest as applied to society and nations

Zionism:
Jewish nationalism

Diaspora:
dispersal; specifically, the dispersal of the Jews outside of Palestine

Balfour Declaration:
(1917) British support for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine

mandate:
authoritative management over a given area; the area under administration

Law of Return:
policy granting immediate citizenship upon immigration to any Jew to Israel

intifada:
a grass roots Palestinian movement in the late 1980s aimed at ending Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

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